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CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

By

MUKULBHAI KALARTHI

Translated from
the original in Gujarati

BY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is an English version by Shri Gurdial Mallik of a book originally in Gujarati. The Gujarati book *Sheel ane Sadachar* by name, was adjudged worthy for the first prize of Rs. 1000/- by the Government of India, under their prize-giving scheme for the year 1955. By way of encouragement the Government also gave Rs 100/- for rendering it into English. This edition of the Gujarati book was accordingly planned to be issued in English. We hope it will interest English readers also. We are indebted to the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, who entrusted to us its publication in English.

5-11-'56

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1

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

Once Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam, was casting up the accounts of the State treasury. It was evening. Presently it became dark. Therefore, he paused to kindle a light. Then he resumed his work.

Shortly afterwards, two officers of the State came there to see the Caliph on some private errand. The Caliph, beckoning to them with his eyes, asked them to wait outside for a while.

No sooner was the work finished, than the Caliph put out the light and kindled another, lying nearby. Calling the officers in, he began to talk with them.

The officers were rather astonished at the strange action of the Caliph. They said to themselves, "Already a light was burning, then why did the Caliph put it out and light another?" They were quite nonplussed.

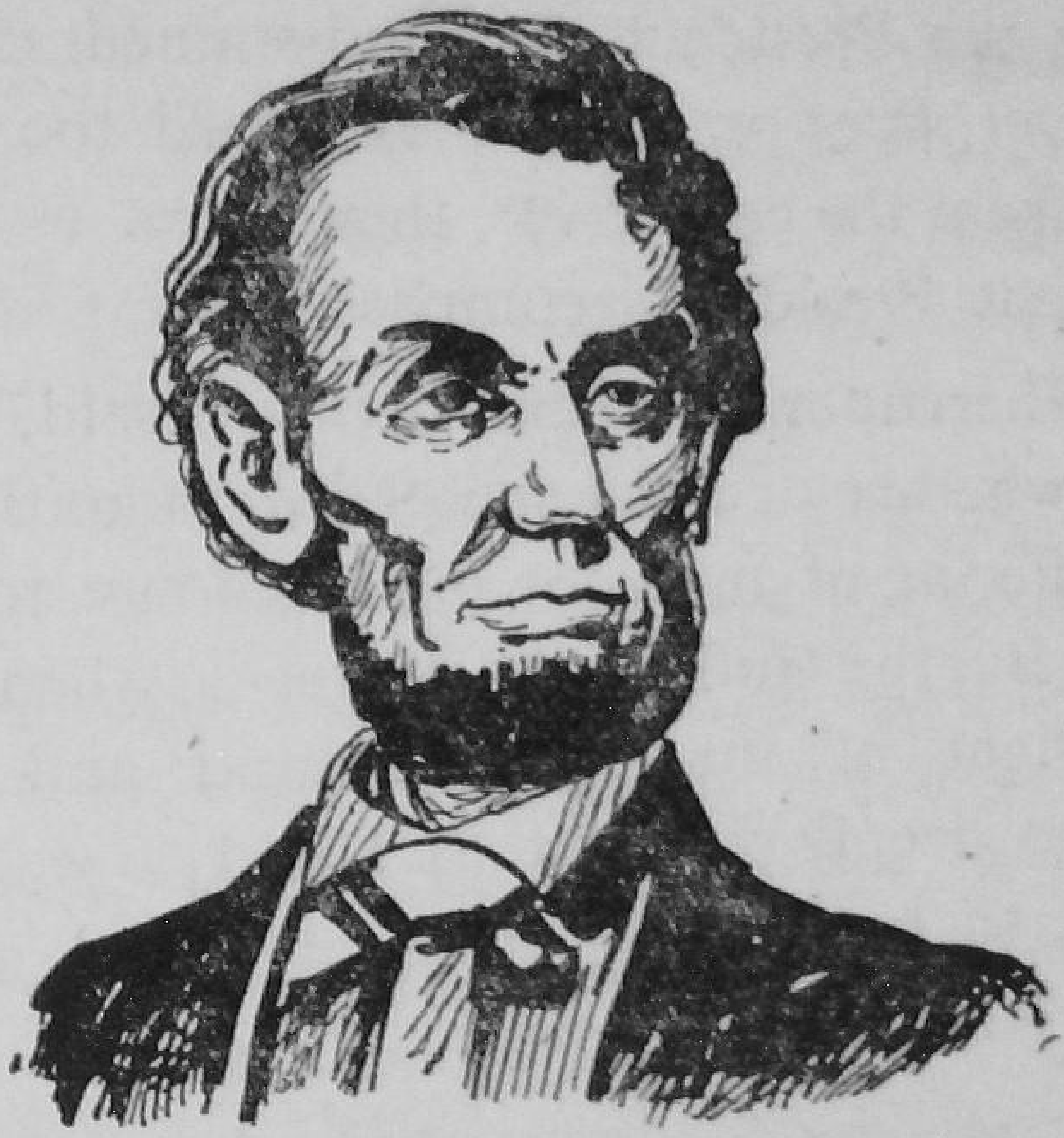
The meeting was soon over. However, overcome by curiosity, the officers said,

"O holy One, may you be pleased to unravel a mystery for us. When we entered the room a light was already burning. But you put it out and when you started talking to us, you kindled another. Pray, why did you do so? O holy One, if you have no objection, be gracious enough to enlighten us on the matter."

The Caliph answered serenely, "When you arrived, I was doing the work of the State. At that time the light that had been kindled was at State expense. Then we started our private work. How could I then continue to use the same light? For, if I were to use the State light for my such private work, then I would be reckoned a thief and a dishonest person. Therefore, for my private work I kindled my own light."

Hearing this the officers rejoiced at the integrity and honesty of the Caliph and returned home full of praise for him.

COMPASSION



One day Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States of America, was on his way to attend the session of the Senate, when he saw a pig stuck up in the mud. It was trying its utmost to extricate itself. But the mud was so deep that it could not come out.

The President at once ordered the cab-driver to halt. Alighting from the cab he extricated the poor, helpless animal. In doing so his clothes were splashed over with mud. Nevertheless he got back into the cab and with the same clothes on, he went straight to the Senate.

The members of the Senate were surprised to see the President in mud-stained clothes. However, later on when they heard the whole story from the cab-driver, they began to praise the great President's compassion.

Whereupon Abraham Lincoln said, "Friends, whether or not I succeeded in mitigating the suffering of the poor pig is known to God alone. But the truth of the matter is, when I saw the plight of the pig, my mind and heart were so deeply pained that I had to extricate it, just to be at ease."

3

GOOD AND EVIL

One day the Prophet Mohammad was bathing in a stream, when he saw a scorpion caught up in the current. It was struggling hard to come out, but in vain, as the current was strong.

The Prophet took pity on the scorpion. He picked it up with his hand and rescued it. But the scorpion instantly stung him and, falling in the water, was again carried away by the current.

The Prophet was a man of compassion. Though stung by the scorpion, his passion to save it so dominated his thoughts that he forgot his own pain. Therefore, he tried once again to take out the scorpion, but with the same result.

Undaunted, the compassionate Prophet tried for the third time to save the scorpion.

Someone standing on the bank of the stream was watching this all the while. He laughingly said to the Prophet, "O Prophet, this wicked scorpion doesn't want to give up its wickedness. Every time it has returned evil for good. Then why should you try at all to save it ? Let it die."

The Prophet Mohammad replied with great composure, "Brother, the scorpion does not want to give up its wickedness, then why should I give up my goodness?"

4
IMPACT OF EXAMPLE

One day a mother went with her eight year old son to the great saint of Maharashtra, Jnaneshwar.

Prostrating herself before the saint she said, "O holy sir, this boy of mine eats a lot of jaggery every day. I have got simply tired of telling him not to do so. But he doesn't pay any heed to me at all. I have, therefore, come to you to request you to persuade him to give up his present habit. Please be gracious unto me."

Jnaneshwar answered gently, "Mother, please come to me along with your boy a week hence. Then I shall say to him whatever I have to say."

After a week both the mother and the son went again to the saint.

Calling the boy to his side Jnaneshwar said sweetly to him, "Dear child, hereafter don't eat jaggery. Do as your mother tells you. Won't you ?"

The boy nodded his head in assent.

Thereupon the mother thought to herself, "If this is all that the saint had to say to my boy, then why did he ask me to go to him after a week ? Couldn't he have said then what he has said today ?" She was, therefore, not a little confused in her mind. So she implored the saint to dispel her doubt.

Whereupon the saint said, "Mother, when you first came to me and asked me to advise your son not to eat jaggery in future, at that time I myself used to eat jaggery. How could I have then advised the boy not to do what I myself was doing? My words would have had no effect at all on him. Therefore, I decided first to give up eating jaggery myself. For, in this way alone, I thought, I would be entitled to give an advice to the boy. I then carried out my decision and now for the last one week I haven't even touched jaggery. Nor would

I eat jaggery hereafter. I am now convinced that I can do without jaggery and, consequently, can advise others not to eat jaggery."

When the mother heard these words of the great saint, tears welled up in her eyes and she fell at his feet. Wiping the tears with a corner of her upper garment, the mother and the son returned home.

5

KINGLY MERCY

Once a king of Khurasan fell seriously ill. Many a physician tried his utmost to cure him, but without much avail. Ultimately, however, they decided to try a novel remedy.

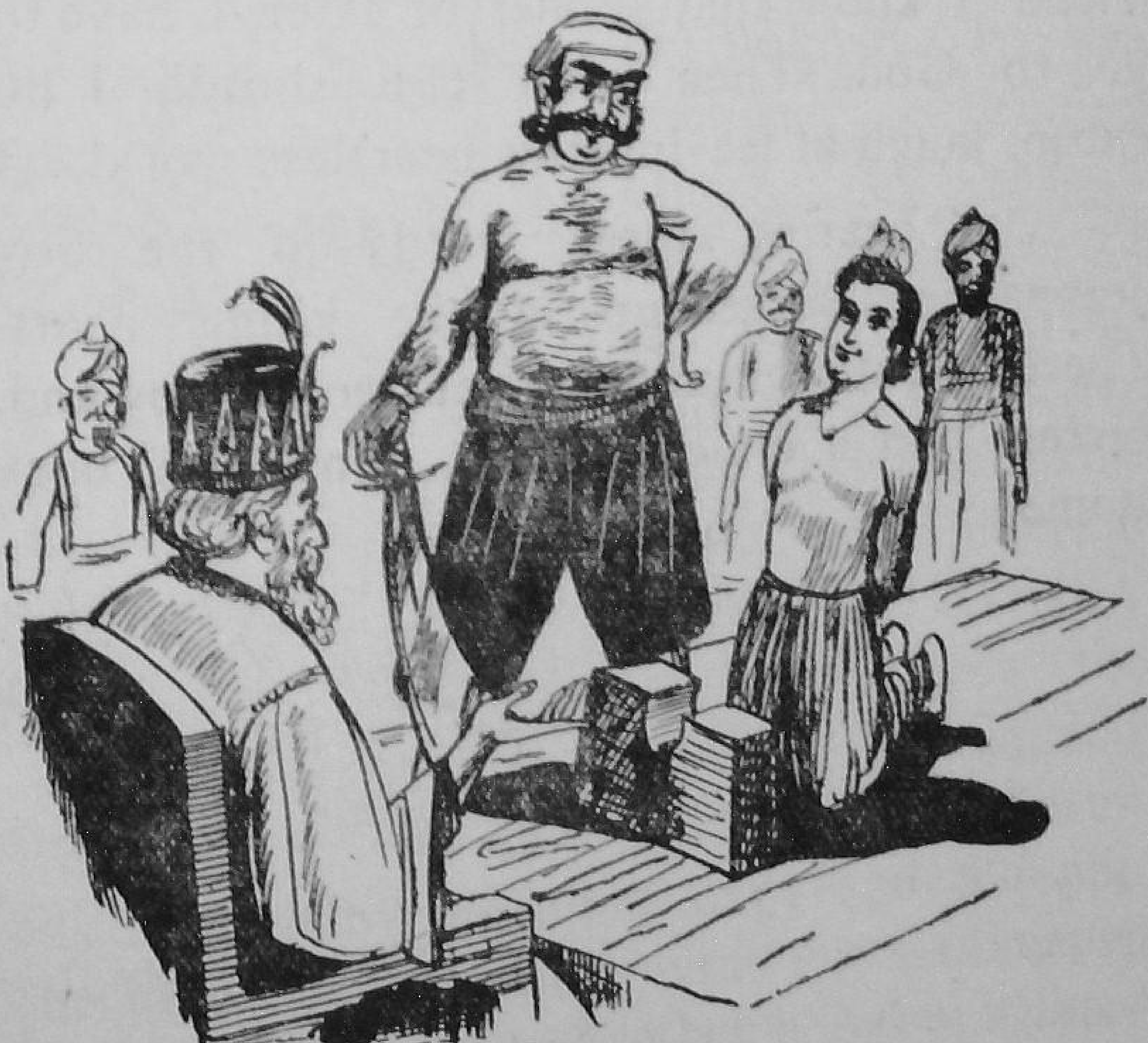
Therefore, they said to the king, "O protector of the world ! please permit us to try one more remedy. Kindly get us a boy who will answer to our description. We shall then prepare a medicine for you out of certain parts of his body."

After a good deal of search a boy — the son of a landlord — answering to the description given by the physicians, was found. The king paid a large sum of money to the parents

and purchased the boy. The Qazi —judge — of the State, also pronounced his judgment in the matter: " To save the life of the king if any of his subjects has even to be killed, no injustice of any kind is done."

The poor boy was then made to stand near the scaffold. The king was also there at that time.

The executioner said to the boy, " Look here, boy, your death is at hand. So be quick and remember God."



Whereupon the boy, looking towards the sky, burst into laughter.

Seeing this the king was surprised and he asked the boy, "You know death is hovering over your head, then why are you laughing like a mad man ?"

The boy answered, "I am laughing at the strange ways of Fate. Love of parents, justice from the Qazi, protection by the king, all these have been denied to me ! Henceforward, therefore, except God I have no other friend. I know that sooner or later I have to go to God. Then what else should I do except laugh at leaving this heartless world ?"

On hearing these words of the boy compassion surged up in the king's heart. Therefore, straightaway he set free the boy and, giving him a lot of money, sent him back home.

6

PATRIOTISM

Lokamanya Tilak was one of the most prominent patriots of India. He was not only a political leader but also a great scholar. His *Gita Rahasya* is a monument of learning.

Once a conference of scholars was held in Bombay. It was attended, among others, by several leading scholars of the country. At this conference Lokamanya Tilak expressed his views on Chaldean culture and on similarities between the cultures of Iran and India. His address was marked by profound study and thought. The audience was spell-bound by his unusual grasp over history and other allied subjects.

After the conference was over, the president on coming out said to Lokamanya Tilak, " Mr. Tilak, your address was wonderful. But one thing troubles me, that is, you are wasting away your great energy on politics. I am quite sure if you take to research in history and other allied subjects, you will one day win international recognition and your learning will be adequately appreciated. Therefore, my advice to you is that, instead of getting soiled in political muddles and ill-directing your great talent, you should devote yourself to some such work. It will earn you international reputation. "

Whereupon Lokamanya Tilak answered, as if out of the depths of his being, " India is not barren. Let her be free once. Then you will find thousands of scholars like me cropping up. Today she is bound in chains of slavery. It is, therefore, the duty of every one at present to make an unreserved offering of his all, talent and energy at the altar of freedom."

7
PRIDE HUMILIATED

Scene I

(King Siddharaj Jayasinh of Gujarat is sitting alone in his palace. Enters the door-keeper.)

Door-keeper — (bowing) Your Highness, the queen-mother Minaldevi has arrived.

Siddharaj — (rather surprised) How is that ? She had gone on pilgrimage to Somanath. Why has she come back so soon ?

(Siddharaj goes out to receive the queen-mother.)
(Enters the queen-mother.)

Siddharaj — (bowing) Mother, how is it that you have returned all of a sudden ?

Minaldevi — (taking her seat on the throne) Son, it is true that I had gone on pilgrimage to Somanath. But when I was nearing my destination, I saw our State officers stopping the pilgrims in order to levy the pilgrim-tax. Those who were not able to pay the tax were going back disappointed and crying. Seeing this my heart went out in sympathy to them. I said to myself, "When so many of the pilgrims have to go back without having a glimpse of God Mahadeva, then what use is my going on pilgrimage?" And so I came away.

Siddharaj — But, mother, if we don't levy taxes, how is the government to function?

Minaldevi—I don't understand all that. I have resolved that I will go on pilgrimage to Somanath only if you withdraw this annoying tax. Till then I will give up food and water.

Siddharaj—(vexed at hearing the threatening words of the queen-mother) But mother, there is no need at all to take such a stern vow. (Looking towards the door) Who is there ?

(The minister enters, followed by the door-keeper, and bows to the king.)

Siddharaj—(addressing the minister) Send forth at once some of the State officials to Somanath with this message from me, that with immediate effect the pilgrim-tax is withdrawn and so the State officers, appointed to levy the tax, should return forthwith to the capital.

Minister—(bowing) Your Highness' order will be carried out.

(Minister goes out.)

Siddharaj—(turning towards the mother) I avow here and now that the credit for the withdrawal of the pilgrim-tax goes to you.

Minaldevi—(caressing Siddharaj on the shoulder) May you prosper! I shall now gladly go on pilgrimage to the temple of Mahadeva.

Scene II

(After a visit to Somanath temple and disbursing a large sum in charity Minaldevi returns to her lodgings. It is night. She is preparing to go to bed.)

Minaldevi —(to herself) At last my heart's longing has been fulfilled. Truly no one in these days could have given away such large sums of money as I have done. There is no benefactor like me in the whole world, nor shall any one be hereafter. (She is puffed up with pride and while in the midst of such thoughts, she falls asleep).

(Morning time. Minaldevi wakes up startled.)

Minaldevi —Ah, Mahadeva himself came to me in a dream and said, "To this temple of mine there has come a poor woman pilgrim. Acquire from her the fruit of her pilgrimage." When I have already made such large charities then it is mere child's play for me to buy the merit of her good deeds from a poor woman. Does Mahadeva want to poke fun at me? (calls out a maid-servant) Who is there?

(The maid-servant enters and bows.)

Minaldevi —Go and tell my minister-in-waiting to send forthwith some members of my retinue to the temple of Mahadeva. There

a poor woman pilgrim has come. They should make a search for her and bring her to me instantly.

(The maid-servant bows and goes away.)

Minaldevi — Yesterday I made votive offerings of so much gold. But instead of appreciating my offerings, still Mahadeva wants to put me to the test in this way! I wonder what offering this poor woman has made to Mahadeva! I have dispensed numerous charities to such poor people. Well, I am quite willing to give this poor woman as much money as she asks for. After all how much can she ask for? There is no dearth of wealth in my son's State treasury.

(After some time the servants along with the poor Brahmin woman enter.)

One of the servants — (bowing) May it please the queen-mother! We have brought this poor woman before you.

Minaldevi — (to the woman) Sister, you came here on pilgrimage, is it not? Give me then the merit that is acquired by you. In exchange I will give you as much money as you ask for.

Brahmin Woman—(in a low voice) Mother, begging for my food all the way I have come here from my home, a distance of over five hundred miles. Day before yesterday I observed a fast. Yesterday, however, a charitably disposed person gave me as alms some roasted ground wheat, but without salt. Half of it I offered to the Lord. Half of the remaining half I offered to a guest. On whatever remained I broke my fast. You are very fortunate, indeed. Your father, brother, husband and son all are rulers. Further, you have had the pilgrim-tax withdrawn. You gave away in offering several millions of gold coins.

With so much of great merit to your credit already, you still wish to acquire my insignificant merit ! This is rather surprising. But, mother, if you won't take it as an offence, may I ask you one thing?

Minaldevi—Of course, of course. And that, too, without any hesitation and gladly.

Brahmin Woman—Mother, if we think about the matter dispassionately, then my merit will weigh more than yours. For, as the scriptures say, if one leads a life of strict discipline, despite great wealth; if one forbears in spite of strength; if one gives in charity in spite of poverty—even if all this done in a small measure—then great merit accrues, indeed.

(Minaldevi is plunged into thought.)

Minaldevi—Sister, you have, indeed, to-day revealed the truth to me. I had made great charities. So I felt very proud. To-day Mahadeva has broken my pride.

(Saying this Minaldevi bows in the direction of Somanath temple.)

Curtain falls.

8

WEALTH FOR WELL-BEING

Once during the regime of one of the Caliphs Guru Nanak visited Baghdad. The Caliph was a tyrant, indeed. For, he extorted money by force from every one. In this way he had amassed inexhaustible wealth. And yet he was not contented, even though he had squeezed his subjects dry. Therefore, the people were simply sick of him. While they had not enough to make both ends meet, the Caliph's treasury went on bulging more and more with wealth.

On hearing of the arrival of Guru Nanak in Baghdad the Caliph also went to meet him. Presently the Guru, picking up a number of pebbles lying scattered near about, counted one hundred and set them aside.

Greatly surprised at this, the Caliph asked the Guru, why he had kept the heap of one hundred pebbles apart.

Guru Nanak replied, "I have collected this heap to hand it over to you for keeping it in trust for me."

The Caliph, further, asked the Guru, when the latter would like to have it back.

Guru Nanak answered, "There is no hurry. On the Day of Judgment I shall also be present in the court of God. You could then bring these pebbles there."

Greatly astonished the Caliph said, "O holy sir, what are you saying? Is it at all possible that on the Day of Judgment one could take such a trifle with him into the presence of God?"

Thereupon Guru Nanak answered in a calm voice, "O Caliph, of course I know that such a trifle will be of no avail on the

Day of Judgment. Nor can any one take any other worldly thing with him. There, standing before God, we shall all be called upon to render unto Him an account of what we did or did not while on this earth. But are you going to leave behind the wealth that you have amassed by tyrannizing over your subjects, starving and harassing them? Do you intend to take all this wealth with you, when you die? It seems so. Otherwise you would not have piled up so much. For were it not so, you wouldn't have subjected your people to unnecessary tyranny. So I thought that if along with your great pile of wealth, you carried also this little heap of pebbles, it will be no burden to you at all. Therefore, I asked you to bring it along with you on the Day of Judgment."

On hearing these wise words of the Guru, truth dawned on the Caliph and from that moment he began to distribute the wealth, that he had amassed, among the poor.

9

THE TEACHER AND THE PUPIL

The name of Justice Mahadeva Govind Ranade is known all over India. Once he happened to be staying in Calcutta on some official business. Ranade was a great lover of learning. During his stay in the city, therefore, he could not resist the temptation of learning Bengali. So he started learning the language with the help of a children's primer.

One day a barber was called to shave him. Carrying the Bengali primer with him Ranade said to the barber, " You see, nowadays I am learning Bengali. While reading this book wherever I don't quite understand, I shall ask you and you will help me. Won't you ?"

Saying this he went on reading the book. While he was being shaved, he asked the barber his difficulties here and there.

At that time Shrimati Ramabai Ranade, his wife, was doing some work in an adjoining room. Overhearing her husband talking to somebody, she went out to see to whom he was talking. And lo and behold ! Her learned husband was learning Bengali from a barber !

After the barber had gone away, she asked her husband laughingly, " You have, indeed, found a wonderful teacher !"

Justice Ranade replied, " Of course you know that Lord Dattatreya had twenty-four teachers. If any one were to ask me to tell him who are my teachers, this barber will head the list. In the olden days, as you know, any one desirous of acquiring knowledge from a teacher, had to serve him. But this teacher of mine, while serving a pupil like me, also imparts knowledge to me ! Now, you tell me, is not my teacher superior to other teachers ?"

10
CHINESE PARABLES
(1)

Confucius was a great thinker of China. Once in the course of his travels he passed

by a hillock. There, near a grave, he saw a woman crying piteously.

Confucius, looking very grave, stood by and heard her heart-rending wail. Soon after he sent one of his disciples to ask the woman what the matter was.

The disciple said to the woman, "Sister, why are you weeping so bitterly ? Is this the grave of someone near and dear to you? What is then the cause of your grievous sorrow?"

The woman replied, "Some time ago a tiger ate up my father-in-law. Soon afterwards my husband met with the same fate. Now my son has been killed by the tiger !"

Hearing the woman's story, the sage was very much astonished. Going up to the woman

he said, "My good woman, if in this province tigers have been causing so much havoc that three members of your own family have been killed, then why don't you people migrate from here to some other province?"

The woman replied, "What you say is quite true. But we like the place. For, nowhere in the work of our Government is there any mismanagement. The people are not exploited. The administration works for their welfare."

Hearing this Confucius said to his disciples, "Disciples, mark well my words. Autocracy is more terrible than the cruel tiger. Therefore, the people feel more harassed under an autocracy than by the tigers and so run away."

(2)

Once upon a time the philosopher Mencius went on a visit to the ruler of Liang. The king said to him, "O great teacher, you have been gracious enough to come here from a great distance. Please, therefore, tell me what will be conducive to the advantage of my State."

Mencius answered, "O king, why did you use the word 'advantage'? Instead, you

ought to have said, 'Tell me what is true and for the well-being of the State.'"

Mencius then remained silent for a while and continued, "If the king were to think of only what should be done for the advantage of the State, then the high officials will argue, 'what should we do for the advantage of our families?' The junior officials will also follow their example. Thus, there will be a scramble for pelf among the higher and lower officials. This will put the whole State in jeopardy. For, to place self-interest first and truth afterwards will lead to such a scramble, while the officials will never be satisfied.

"Therefore, first and foremost, the officers of the State should think of what is true and for the well-being of the State. They should never talk in terms of advantage."

(3)

Once Tsekung asked Confucius about the right way to administer a State.

Confucius answered, "Three things are important for the State: Sufficient food, adequate army and faith of the people in the ruler."

Tsekung further asked, "If all these three things can't be had at the same time and

one of them has to be done away with, then which of these would you advise to be eliminated first ?"

Confucius replied, "The army."

Tsekung finally asked, "Honoured sir, if out of the remaining two also one has to be eliminated, what would you advise ?"

Confucius answered, "Food. From time immemorial death has been clinging to men. But if the people have no faith in the ruler no State could ever endure."

11

COMPANY OF THE GOOD

Once a saint went into a village. Because of his genial nature he soon won the love and respect of all, young and old, men and women. The whole village would turn up every night to listen to his devotional music and message in the village courtyard.

All this perturbed the village headman. He thought to himself, "I am the village headman. But all the people don't come to me so enthusiastically, nor do they attend to what I say. But this so-called saint has been here hardly for two or three days, and yet

they have become mad after him and all the time some people are seen sitting around him. I wonder what spell he has cast over them !" In this way every day his heart burnt with jealousy, but to no effect. For, who cares for the village headman, when the whole village goes out in love to a saint !

One day a number of young men were talking in the village : " Every night the whole village gathers in the courtyard, but how is it that our headman has not come there even once ? Let's go to him tod-ay and somehow persuade him to listen to the saint's devotional music. "

Then they all went in a deputation to the headman. After greeting him they sat down. Whereupon the headman said, " My young friends, what has brought all of you here to-day ? Has there been any fighting in the village ? "

One of the young men replied, " No sir, no. There's nothing of the kind. We have come here only to know why, when all the people gather every night to hear the saint, you alone are conspicuous by your absence."

Hitting upon a pretext, the headman said, "My friends, you see I have now grown old and, further, I don't keep good health these days either. After the day's hard work in the field I feel so dead tired, that I do not have the slightest inclination to stir out anywhere afterwards. Nor can I keep late hours because of advancing age. Otherwise do you think I could ever keep away from the saint's music and message?"

Another young man then observed, "What you say is quite true. But you should at least once come there. We have resolved to take you there with us to-day. You can go back home, if you like, after five minutes. I am sure you will come with us."

After repeated requests at last the headman consented, though hesitatingly.

As usual all the villagers had gathered in the courtyard. To-day even the hitherto hesitating headman was seen amongst them. The saint noticed this. So greeting the headman, he said, "You have come, brother? Welcome."

The headman saluted the saint nonchalantly and stood aside. Then the saint, pointing to a seat spread out nearby, said, "Would you like to sit down, brother? Please."

Presently the saint began his devotional music and discourse. But the self-centred headman felt not in the least interested in them. So he stood up to go away. Whereupon the saint said, "Do you wish to get up, brother? You may."

The headman once again saluted the saint, this time also with an air of indifference, and started to go. Therefore, the saint said, "Do you desire to go away, brother? Then you may."

The headman then set his feet homewards. But all along the way these four sentences continued to ring in his ears:

"You have come, brother? Welcome."

"Would you like to sit down, brother? Please."

"Do you wish to get up, brother? You may."

"Do you desire to go away, brother? Then you may."

Soon after reaching home the headman went to bed. In the night in sleep also, however, he continued to hear the above sentences.

Now it so happened that that very night four thieves came there for the purpose of committing a theft. They went into the backyard with a view to breaking into the house, when they overheard the headman saying in sleep, "You have come, brother? Welcome."

The thieves were startled at hearing these words and at once sat down. But presently the headman muttered again in sleep, "Would you like to sit down, brother? Please."

The thieves were confused! They thought that the headman had surely espied them. So they got up to run away, when they heard these words of the headman, "Do you wish to get up, brother? You may."

The thieves were at their wit's end. They were ready to run away, when the headman once again muttered, this time the words "Do you desire to go away, brother? Then you may."

Whereupon the thieves ran away for their life. But even after they had reached home, they were not at peace. At last, early in the morning the next day, they went to the headman, confused and quaking. Falling at his feet they said, " Sir, you are our parent and protector, please forgive us for our crime ! "

But the headman didn't quite understand what they meant. Ultimately, however, when he heard from them the whole story of what had happened the previous night, he realized the import of their plea.

The headman said to himself, " I sat only once for a while near a saint and the result has been that I have been spared a great theft in my house. Wonderful, indeed, is the result of keeping company with the good ! If I were to keep regular company with the good, my whole life would be changed for the better. So from today every night I shall keep company with the saint. "

Not revealing the working of his mind and secret decision to any one, the headman pardoned the thieves and admonished them not to repeat their heinous action. Then, saluting the saint inwardly, he went out to work in the field.

12

GLORY OF GOD'S NAME

One day a man went to the house of saint Kabir. But he was not in at that time. The wife of the saint, however, said to the visitor, " Brother, have you come to meet him on some special business ? He has gone out. You can wait for him if you like. Otherwise if you tell me the nature of your business then I shall see what I can do about it."

With tears in his eyes the man answered, "I am a sinful man! I feel so repentant about my sins. But I don't know what to do. Therefore, at the instance of a friend, I have come to meet the saint. Though I have never met him before, yet I have faith in him and I am sure that he will show me the right path."

The saint's wife thereupon observed, "Brother, the Name of God alone can save the sinner. After a bath in the Ganges and with a pure heart repeat the Divine Name thrice. All your sins will be destroyed. You will be absolved."

To the visitor these words of the saint's wife sounded quite appropriate. Therefore, after a dip in the holy river Ganges and repeating the Name of God thrice, he retraced his steps homewards. But his joy knew no bounds and he went on repeating the Divine Name.

Presently the saint chanced to come that way. Seeing the man repeating the Divine Name so joyously, he halted him and asked him what the matter was.

The saint rejoiced at first when he heard of the advice his wife had given to the man.

But soon, becoming grave, he continued his journey homewards.

On reaching the house the saint sat down on his usual seat and exclaimed with deep sorrow in his voice, "Alas ! I didn't know that even in my own house there was so much lack of faith !"

The wife did not quite understand the import of her husband's words. Therefore, somewhat surprised, she said, "I am not able to make you out. So please tell me simply what you have said. Why are you looking so sad ?"

The saint replied, "Ah, were a man to take the Name of God with a sincere heart even once, the meanest of sinners, too, would be saved. Then why did you tell the man, who was here a little while ago, to take the Name of God thrice ? Don't you have even this much of faith in the Name ? It is this ignorance on your part of the glory of the Name of God that has distressed me greatly."

Hearing these words of her saintly husband with her eyes downcast, she sat down near his feet.

13
TRUE ORNAMENTS

Pandit Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar was a famous man of Bengal. From his very childhood he had a very tender heart and he never turned away any visitor to his house, empty-handed.

One day some one came to the door and piteously began to cry for money. Vidyasagar went into the house and said to the mother, " Mother dear, there's a guest at the door. Have you any money to give him ? "

The mother replied, " Darling son, there's not a single pice in the house ! You go on giving every one who comes to the door and so nothing is left. "

Presently Vidyasagar's eyes fell on the golden bangles his mother was wearing. Pointing to these, he said, " Mother, could I have one

of these bangles, so that I may sell it and get some money ? Then I could give something to the visitor. Mother, don't you feel sad. When I grow up then I shall gladly give you as many ornaments as you like."

The mother knew the wilful nature of her son. So she instantly took off one of the bangles.

Many years afterwards one day Vidyasagar said to the mother, "Mother dear, you know I had promised to give you when I grew up, as many ornaments as you wished to have. Well then, tell me now how many ornaments you want."

The mother answered, "Son dear, I had myself been thinking for some time past of the matter. You have, therefore, done well to bring it up yourself. But, son, the ornaments I have in mind are very costly, indeed."

Vidyasagar rejoined, "O mother, don't you consider the cost. I don't mind in the least, if in getting you the ornaments you want, my entire property is swallowed up."

The mother said with great serenity, "Listen to me then, my son, the ornaments that I am thinking of are made neither of gold nor of silver. For, such ornaments only create quarrels between man and man. So I don't want them.

Nor would such ornaments look well on my person.

"Son dear, of the ornaments that I require, the first is *knowledge*. In our country because of lack of opportunities for learning, thousands of children are ignorant. Therefore, you will start a school for poor children where they will acquire knowledge free of charge.

"The second ornament is *service of the sick*. In our country innumerable poor people — men, women and children—suffer from disease and die because there is no provision for medical aid. Therefore, you should set up a charitable dispensary for such people where they can get medicine free.

"My third ornament is *feeding the hungry*. In our country thousands of poor people have to starve, because they can't get any food. Therefore, to enable such people to keep their body and soul together, you will open a free kitchen, so that they might be saved from premature death."

Thereafter Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar strove his utmost throughout his life to fulfil the wishes of his mother and, thus, ensured peace to the soul of the dear departed.

EXEMPLARY INTEGRITY

In Ahmedabad there was a Government official, whose name was Shri Ambashankarbhai Setalvad. One day a man went to him to seek his help in achieving his particular purpose and, to this end, he offered him a bribe.

After a few minutes' talk the man said to Shri Setalvad, "Sir, you are a high Government official. So if you do my work, I shall ever be grateful to you. Furthermore, to remunerate you for your labours I have brought with me a cartload of rupees to give you."

Shri Setalvad replied, "I am sorry I cannot oblige you. I shall depose only in favour of the party whose statement is true. Therefore, you can take back your money."

Whereupon the man said, "Sir, think over it again and listen to me. It is not a small amount I am offering to you. It's one full cartload of rupees. So don't miss this opportunity to make money."

Shri Setalvad rejoined, "Even if you were to offer twenty-five such cartloads as bribe, I will not do anything dishonest."

The man countered somewhat angrily, "All right then. But remember you will never have another man like me to offer you such a large sum of money."

Shri Ambashankarbhai Setalvad only calmly replied, "My friend, for aught I know there may be someone who could offer me such a large amount, but you will find it difficult to come across another man who would turn down such an offer."

15

SAINT'S ADVICE TO A RULER

Tukaram was a great saint of Maharashtra. His devotional songs (*abhangas*) are very popular.

Once Shivaji sent a man to the saint with horse, palanquin and suitable gifts and requested him to grace him by paying him a visit.

The saint returned the gifts and sent back this message to Shivaji, "My dear sir,

if I come there, what need I ask you for? In doing so, so much of my time will be taken away from my devotions. In my eyes gold and clay are the same. I see only God in the king as well as in the ant. I have neither any hope nor any attachment. Devotion to God Vithala occupies my whole being all the time. You are a king. Administer your State ethically and truthfully. Look after your subjects properly. Make religion your sheet-anchor. Protect the helpless and have devotion to God Vithala. If you do all these, that would be as good as your making gifts to me."

16

SENSE OF DUTY

Ibrahim was a great Moslem saint. He worked in an orchard. One day the owner of the orchard, along with some of his friends, went there on picnic. Calling Ibrahim he said to him, "Pluck some fruits and bring them here for the guests. They want to taste them. See to it, therefore, that the fruits you pluck are both good and ripe."

After some time Ibrahim brought a basket, full of fruits. The owner of the orchard and his friends started to eat the fruits. But most of the fruits were sour. Whereupon the owner

said to Ibrahim, " What kind of fruits have you brought ? Why did you not pluck from the trees the fruits of which are sweet ? You are so slipshod in your work. You simply picked up fruits from here and there and brought them. Where was the hurry ? I wonder what you do the whole day in the orchard. You don't know even this much what particular trees have sweet fruits ! "

Ibrahim answered gently, " But, sir, how am I to know what particular trees have sweet fruits ? "

The owner then said a little angrily, " What a question to ask ! Do you live in an orchard or in a forest ? For such a long time you have been keeping watch over the orchard and yet you don't know this much. "

The saint rejoined, " But, sir, I have never tasted any fruit of the orchard. Therefore, how could I ever know which of the trees have sweet fruits ? "

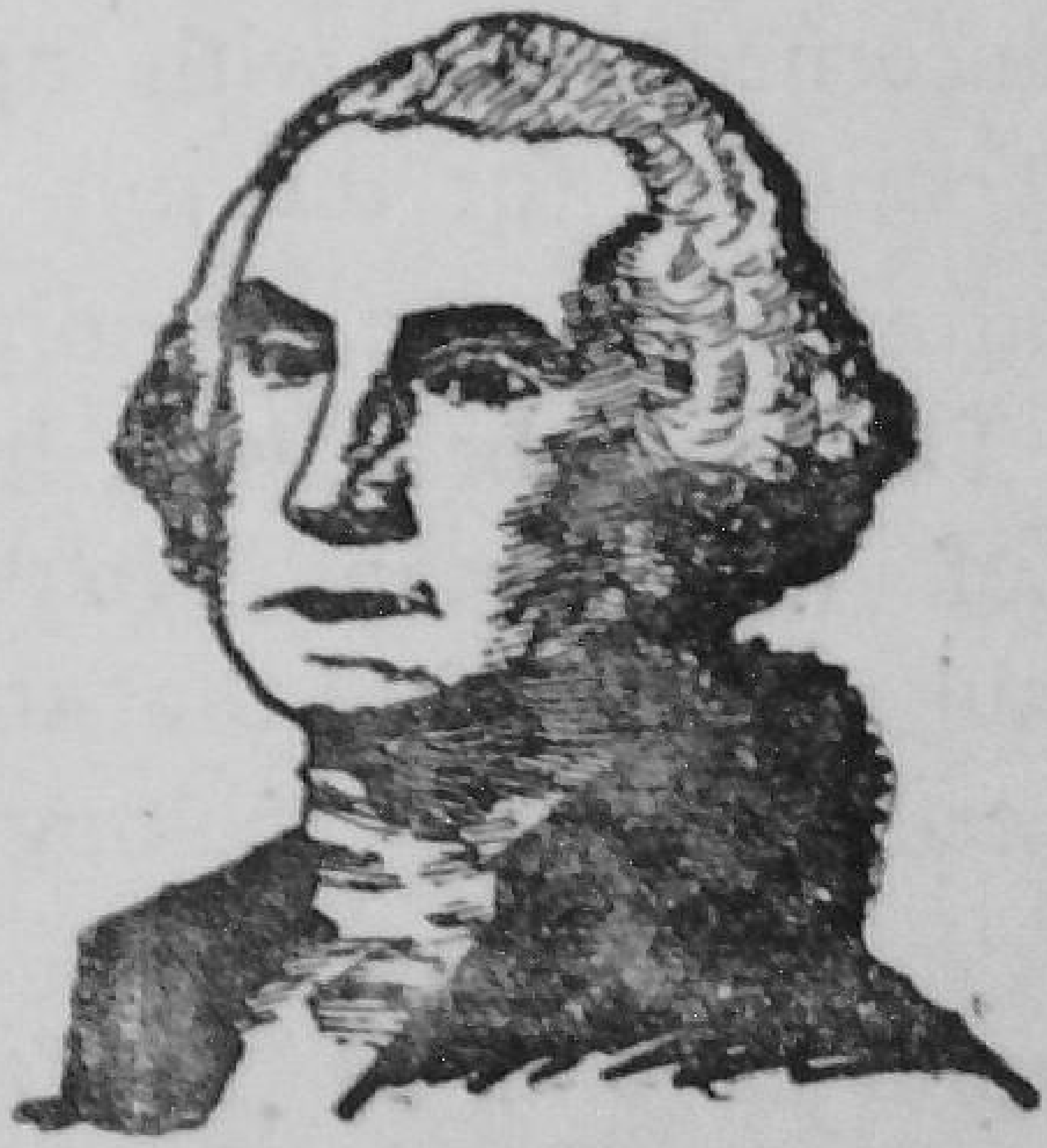
The owner was surprised and said, " Is it really so that you have never tasted any fruit in the orchard ? But how could that be possible ? "

The saint Ibrahim answered, " Sir, you have set me here to keep watch over the orchard. My duty is to prevent anyone from entering the orchard and plucking the fruit

without due permission. If, therefore, instead of keeping watch I were to start eating fruit without permission, what would people say ? I would then be swerving from my duty."

17

MERIT, NOT INFLUENCE



When America became independent, her first President was George Washington.

Once he felt a need to engage a man on a high salary for Government work. The post was important and it also carried a large salary. Therefore, many people applied for it and a large number of applications was received. Amongst the candidates there was also a friend of George Washington.

A large majority of the people felt sure that the President would appoint his friend

to the post. The friend, too, felt likewise. So his mind was completely at ease.

But Washington was a true patriot. How could he have then acted in this important matter without due sense of responsibility and circumspection and without absolute integrity? Friends or relatives, to him all were alike. He was concerned only with appointing a person most suitable for the job.

Soon afterwards the appointment was announced. The incumbent was, however, not the friend of Washington. What was more surprising still was the fact that the President had appointed a person belonging to the opposition.

Whereupon several of his friends asked Washington, "How is it that you have appointed a person belonging to the opposition, instead of your own dear friend?"

Washington answered, "My friend is good as a friend. But I believe he is not fully qualified for the post. Moreover, in appointing persons to responsible posts, one should not be governed by any consideration of extraneous influence. Merit alone should count. The person whom I have appointed may be of the opposite camp, but he is the fittest person for the post."

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